

## 'Death Map' Shows Where Americans Most Likely to Die

by Fox-News.com

A new map plotting deaths resulting from forces of nature reveals where Mother Nature is most likely to kill you.

People living in the South along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts have a higher likelihood of dying from a natural hazard compared to residents of the Great Lakes area and urbanized Northeast.

And while intense hurricanes and tornadoes steal headlines for their intense winds and overall destruction, the new map shows what other previous studies have found, that everyday hazards, such as severe winter and summer weather, and heat account for the majority of natural hazard deaths in the United States.

"This work will enable research and emergency management practitioners to examine hazard deaths through a geographic lens," said researcher Susan Cutter of the University of South Carolina, Columbia. "Using this as a tool to identify areas with higher than average hazard deaths can justify allocation of resources to these areas with the goal of reducing loss of life."

â€¢ [Click here to read the abstract of the report and view a PDF.](#)

â€¢ [Click here to visit FOXNews.com's Natural Science Center.](#)

Cutter and Kevin Borden, also of the University of South Carolina, Columbia, analyzed nationwide data from 1970 to 2004.

In addition to the South having high mortality from natural hazards, other risky areas included the northern Great Plains region where heat and drought were the biggest killers and the Rocky Mountain region (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and New Mexico) with winter weather and floods as top killers.

The south-central United States is also a dangerous area, with floods and tornadoes posing the greatest threats. Cutter and Borden found that of the natural hazards, some were more deadly than others over the years, including:

Heat/drought (ranked highest among hazards): caused 19.6 percent of total deaths due to natural hazards

Severe summer weather: 18.8 percent

Winter weather: 18.1 percent

Flooding: 14 percent

Tornadoes: 11.6 percent

Lightning: 11.3 percent

Geophysical events (such as earthquakes), wildfires and hurricanes: less than 5 percent

Coastal (storm surge, rip currents and coastal erosion): 2.3 percent

"It is the chronic hazards like severe summer weather and severe winter weather and heat that are contributing the majority of the hazard fatalities, not fatalities associated with things like earthquakes or hurricanes," Cutter told LiveScience.

She added that people and officials tend to be more prepared for big hurricanes and tornadoes, which could partly explain the lower mortality from these storms compared with everyday occurrences.

Overall, during the study period, nearly 20,000 people died due to natural hazards. For comparison, here are the top five causes of U.S. deaths in 2005, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

Heart disease: 652,091 deaths

Cancer: 559,312

Stroke (cerebrovascular diseases): 143,579

Chronic lower respiratory diseases: 130,933

Accidents (unintentional injuries): 117,809

The natural hazards research, which will be detailed in a forthcoming issue of the International Journal of Health Geographics, was supported by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism.

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